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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA POLITICAL NEWSLETTER JANUARY 25-JANUARY 29

REF: Pretoria 0080

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¶11. (SBU) This was written in partnership with the Open Source Center's Pretoria Bureau. The newsletter is open to contributions from officers in the Embassy or in the Consulates who wish to highlight political trends. Contact Madeline Seidenstricker or Jonathan Smallridge for more information, or to make contributions. The newsletter also is available on the Political Section's blog, "A View from South Africa," found on intelink.gov.

Domestic News

ANC Wins Big in By-Elections

¶12. (SBU) The ANC won all 12 contested seats in municipal by-elections in Mpumalanga, Free State, Northwest and Eastern Cape provinces, according to results tabulated by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). "Voter turnout varied between 60.45 percent and 16.24 percent with an average of 30.34 percent," the IEC said in a statement. The ANC said it was pleased to have retained every ward with a "decisive majority" in the by-elections. Spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said, "The lowest vote for the ANC was 61 percent, and in all the rest the majority was over 70%, and in five wards in the 90s." He said a ward in Lekwa, Mpumalanga, was unopposed. In Eastern Cape, the ANC retained Ndlambe (Port Alfred); in Free State it won two wards in Letsemeng (Koffiefontein); in Mpumalanga it retained Mkhondo (Piet Retief), Steve Tshwete (Middelburg), Thaba Chweu (Sabie), Umjindi (Barberton), and four wards in Lekwa (Standerton). In Northwest, it retained Ramotshere Moiloa (Zeerust). The ANC said it was "happy with the people's vote of confidence in the ANC." (News24, January 29, 2010)

South African Cricket Board Fires Manager to Quicken "Transformation"

¶13. (SBU) The South African Cricket Board forced the resignation of the national team's coach as well as the country's board of selectors reportedly because the team has not achieved racial transformation quickly enough. The Board, in conjunction with the government, decided in recent years that at least four black players should be included on South Africa's national team to promote South African diversity. However, the team featured no black players following their latest Test series against England and there are few black players in the national system ready to compete internationally. Coach Mickey Arthur resigned and the entire selection committee for the national team was removed on January 26. Although the South African Cricket Board did not say lack of transformation was the reason for the changes, most sports analysts and commentators, as well as several of the sacked members of the board of selectors say it was. (Mail and Guardian, January 26-28, 2010)

What's in a name? Pretoria vs. Tshwane Issue Resurfaces

¶14. (SBU) The Afrikaans press reported early in the week that the government planned to push ahead prior to the start of the World Cup in June with officially changing the name of Pretoria to Tshwane. The story broke in the Beeld newspaper on January 27 and was quickly picked up by all major media outlets. (Note: the proposal to change the city's name was first mooted in 2005, and has been debated ever since. The metropolitan area which includes Pretoria is already officially known as Tshwane. End note.) The Freedom Front Plus (FFP), most of whose supporters are white Afrikaners, vowed to fight any change of the name and AfriForum officials said they would. Qany change of the name and AfriForum officials said they would

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challenge any move to officially rename the city in court. On January 28, at the last minute, Deputy Arts and Culture Minister Paul Mashatile canceled a briefing to address the government's plans, reportedly because he faced pressure from the FFP. FFP leader (and Deputy Agriculture Minister) Pieter Mulder argued that a change in Pretoria's name would split South Africans at a time when the government was hoping for increased patriotism and unity. He also said, "Because Pretoria's name is internationally known there will be huge confusion with foreign soccer fans who now suddenly will be attending games in Tshwane." (Beeld, Sowetan, Business Day, Sunday Times, January 27-29, 2010)

Congress of the People's Problems Continue

¶15. (SBU) Internal squabbles in the Congress of the People (COPE) opposition party (founded in 2009 by breakaway ANC members who opposed the ruling party's decision to sack president Thabo Mbeki) are continuing to plague the organization. The COPE youth league on January 25 passed a vote of no confidence in the party's national leadership and called for the immediate dissolution of the national committee. The youth leaders, who are aligned to party leader Mbhazima Shilowa, proposed that an early election and policy conference be held at the end of May in place of an elective conference already set for August. Following the youth league's announcement, COPE's current national leadership said publicly they have no plans to step down before the party's elective conference. Shilowa and other COPE officials say they will only respond to calls by the youth movement once they have studied a report detailing the reasons for the youth's move. In a separate development, on January 28, a faction of the youth league who support rival party leader Mosiuoa Lekota accused Shilowa publicly of hijacking the party and circulated its list of preferred candidates for the elective conference. Unsurprisingly, Shilowa and his allies are not on the list of preferred candidates. (SABCNews, January 26, 2010 and Mail and Guardian, January 29, 2010)

Calls from the Left to Nationalize the Reserve Bank

¶16. (SBU) There are growing calls in the tripartite alliance to explore the nationalization of the South African Reserve Bank. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa said on January 25 the proposal would lead to prosperity for the poor. African National Congress (ANC) General Secretary (and South African Communist Party Chairman) Gwede Mantashe has called on the party to consider a state takeover of the central bank. Mantashe tabled the proposal at the ANC's recent national executive committee meeting, but party spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said the proposal had not yet been discussed by the ANC's top brass. The proposal is expected to be on the agenda of the next summit of the ruling Triple Alliance (ANC, SACP, Cosatu) when the review of the mandate of the Reserve Bank would be discussed further. The Bank currently is privately owned by 630 shareholders. (Sowetan, January 25, 2010)

ANC Leaders Say They Will Prioritize Service Delivery

¶17. (SBU) The delivery of government services, particularly to disadvantaged areas, continues to be a major challenge to the SAG. According to the ANC's parliamentary caucus, problems with service delivery remain a huge obstacle that will only be sorted out with time. Livhuwani Ndou, who serves in the office of the ANC chief

Otime. Livhuwani Ndou, who serves in the office of the ANC chief whip, spoke to reporters about the caucus's oversight visit to Diepsloot and Kya Sands in Johannesburg and said the visits to both areas formed part of the ruling party's campaign titled, "Taking Caucus to the People." According to Ndou, the government is serious about improving delivery and the main objective of the current campaign, which is spearheaded by the Johannesburg City Council, is to interact with residents in the two communities and publicize the government's service delivery programs. Ndou said, "Service delivery is not an event but a process and these visits are to ensure that promises contained in our elective manifesto are carried out." (The Citizen, January 24, 2010)

Democratic Alliance Expels Non-Paying Members

¶ 18. (SBU) Senior Democratic Alliance (DA) leaders expelled four DA councilors in Limpopo for failing to pay the party's monthly membership fee. The four have since accused the party of firing them because they questioned the cost of the monthly contribution, which is roughly 20 dollars. The party's provincial leader, Desiree van der Walt, confirmed the councilors' expulsion and told reporters that the DA will not tolerate uncommitted members. (Sowetan, January 25, 2010)

Change Coming for Medical Parole Law

¶ 19. (SBU) The country's laws on medical parole may change following the controversial parole of President Jacob Zuma's former business partner Schabir Shaik. A team led by legal expert Judge Siraj Desai released its first draft report recommending that certain changes be

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made to parts of Section 79 of the Correctional Services Act. The report recommends, among other things, that medical parole be reviewed should an offender's health improve while they are out on medical parole. Correctional Services Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula appointed the task team after loopholes were spotted in the Act following the release of Shaik last year after he had served only two years of his 15-year prison term. "A number of questions have been asked about the decisions we have made as the Department in releasing people on medical parole, and we felt a task team can clarify some of the questions" said Mapisa-Nqakula. The recommendations will be sent to Parliament once all the stakeholders have had an opportunity to air their views. Parliament would have to any recommendations. (Buanews, January 27, 2010)

State Security Minister's Wife Arrested

¶ 10. (SBU) After months of speculation over her involvement in a high profile drug smuggling case, Sheryl Cwele, the wife of the State Security Minister, was arrested at her South Coast home early this morning and was due to appear in court on January 29, the National Prosecuting Authority confirmed. The arrest by "The Hawks" crime fighting unit was timed for the day after she returned to her job as the director of health and community services in the Hibiscus Coast Municipality, according to press releases. (News24, January 29, 2010)

International News

Australian, South African Foreign Ministers Hold Talks, Announce Plan to Assist Zimbabwe

¶ 11. (SBU) Business Day Online reported on January 27 that the Australian government, a vocal critic of the Zimbabwe government, and one of the governments instrumental in getting it kicked out of the Commonwealth, has softened its approach and will now provide assistance to Harare. "We have agreed on projects to help Zimbabwe with taxation laws as well as water and sanitation technical expertise," Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith told reporters January 26. He said Zimbabwe needed technical expertise to reform its tax laws and build the economy. Smith said Australia's longstanding view about Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe was that

he ought to leave office. But he said that political developments in the country were encouraging. He announced a further commitment of up to 6 million Australian dollars to co-operate with South Africa in supporting the recovery of the Zimbabwean economy and basic services. [Description of Source: Johannesburg Business Day Online in English -- Website of privately owned regional newspaper; URL: <http://www.bday.co.za/>]

Zuma Attends World Economic Forum . . .

¶12. (SBU) President Zuma is in Davos, Switzerland from January 27 to 31 to attend the 40th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum. Zuma led the South African delegation and was accompanied by National Planning Commission Minister Trevor Manuel, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel, Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Buyelwa Sonjica and Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk. There was a strong focus throughout the early sessions of the Forum on the promotion of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. (The Presidency, January 25)

. . . Then Off to Ethiopia

¶13. (SBU) Zuma is scheduled to attend the 14th Ordinary Session of Q13. (SBU) Zuma is scheduled to attend the 14th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Ethiopia following the World Economic Forum. Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabae is already in Addis Abba for the ministerial sessions which precede the summit. (The Presidency, January 25)

Legal Efforts Underway to Force Publication of Report on Zimbabwe

¶14. (SBU) The South African History Archive and the Southern African Center for the Survivors of Torture will ask the Pretoria High Court to force the South African Government to release a potentially explosive report on post-election violence in Zimbabwe following that country's 2008 elections. In May 2008, former President Thabo Mbeki commissioned retired South African generals to visit Zimbabwe and report back on the violence which erupted after the March 2008 polls. The generals, including retired Lieutenant General Gilbert Romano, retired Brigadier-General Ray Moerane and retired Lieutenant General Lambert Moloi, entered Zimbabwe in May 2008 and returned for a second mission in June 2008. The exercise had at the time cost taxpayers roughly US\$75,000, yet no report has

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been forthcoming. Although the government has denied the existence of any report, both the South African History Archive and the Southern African Center for the Survivors of Torture believe it does exist. The government has yet to indicate whether it will oppose the application. (IOL, January 25)

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